

THE NEED FOR A  
HISPANIC OUTREACH

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Is there a need for an outreach program aimed at the Hispanic population in the State of Wisconsin as part of our WELS mission efforts? To answer this question and 11 other questions, questionnaires were sent to pastors and officials of the WELS. Selection of these people was based on whether or not there was a large Hispanic population in the area, and then arbitrarily the District Presidents, the Chairmen of District Mission Boards, the GBHM Assoc. Chairman and the Chairman, the BWM Assoc. Chairman and the Vice Chairman, the Latin American Mission Board, two teachers involved with Hispanic outreach, and two pastors out of state who were recommended because of their work in this field. Out of the 26 surveys sent out, 24 returned. The questions on the survey can be broken down into the following groups: Ideas on Population; Adequacy of Mission Outreach; Barriers and Language; Methods for Hispanic Outreach; and General Comments.

#### IDEAS ON POPULATION

All seemed to be quite aware of the Hispanic population in their area. One pastor contacted the Chamber of Commerce to get a population figure, but the Chamber of Commerce didn't even know how many Hispanics there were and replied, "small." (Survey # 18) That particular city had only 5 Hispanics in it according to the 1980 Census information. Only one survey reported that there were no Hispanics in a given area (# 1) but the Census information has 93 listed in that city and 889 Hispanics county wide. In fairness to this pastor the size of the congregation and his other duties might have something to do with the reply. As was stated, all seemed to be quite aware of the Hispanic population and generally quite accurate in estimating a population figure.

#### ADEQUACY OF MISSION OUTREACH

Many pointed out that other denominations are using all the means

available to get members from among the Hispanics. Some of the Pentecostal and Charismatic groups do use the Spanish language in their outreach. Although my mother-in-law, who is of Mexican descent and lives in Wisconsin, has told me that the Roman Catholic Church, "fights fire with fire." The Roman Catholic Church will bring in a Spanish speaking Priest to bring the Hispanics back to its fold. Where they have done this it has proved quite effective and virtually brings to a standstill any Mission Outreach program. This practice was not noted by any of the people who responded.

On the subject of our own Mission efforts, the feeling woefully inadequate sums it up. There are many souls still perishing without the Gospel. As long as this can be said there will be more than enough work in the Mission field. To quote from the surveys: "Personally I feel that our 'religious outreach' in all areas is less than adequate, and that this is particularly true in our reaching out to minorities." (# 1) "We in the WELS have virtually no outreach to the Hispanic community in the Milwaukee area." (# 12) "Inadequate, esp. WELS." (# 15) One reply hinted that the outreach program in Madison may soon be adequate when the full time Spanish speaking pastor arrives. (# 13)

In general it was felt all areas of evangelism were inadequate, especially to the minorities. The following shows this. Of the various areas that have a high concentration of Hispanics, Milwaukee with 54,343; Racine with 7,201; Waukesha with 3,998; and Kenosha with 3,578 there is the least being done. (Madison has 3,280 but also people to carry out such a program.) Many replies suggested that something be done in the Milwaukee area and specifically the Walkers Point area. (# 9 & 13) From at least one response (# 19) it can be concluded that the farther away

Hispanics are from the centers of high concentration, the more readily they blend in with the rest of the community.

This observation leads to the other side of the coin. There should not be a need for a specific outreach directed at any one group or minority. We ought to be reaching out to all. True enough. But it doesn't seem to work out that way in reality. In reality we want to be sure of reaching out to all. To do this, it seems necessary to make a specific mission drive aimed at a particular group. Some years ago that outreach was aimed at the inner city churches and the African minority. With that program established now, attention can be shifted to another segment of the population. Humanly speaking, we can only do one thing at a time and do it well, perhaps our minority outreach is a manifestation of this principle.

#### BARRIERS AND LANGUAGE

Much on this subject was said by Mr. Tomás Gómez at the 1984 Mission Seminar, Jan. 25 and 26. Attention should be called to Mr. Gómez's article in the Mission Seminar Booklet, Session V, pp. 14-16. (See attached copy.)

Language may be considered a barrier. The first generation that settles in a country where another language is spoken will have trouble with the new language. The Germans did when they settled here and now the Hispanics. Yet because of our German Heritage, it doesn't seem to bother us, even today, if we have to speak German to older people. Granted that is becoming rare. Nevertheless there are still some churches in this area that have German services and no one cries out that they ought to be speaking English. In Pastoral Theology classes at the Seminary, students are warned that the aged often revert to their

mother tongue. Most pastors don't hesitate to speak German with the "old timers." Many will tell you that there is a certain feel for the words which is lost when they are brought into English. Take for example the word, "Gemütlichkeit." Put that into English in 25 words or less. But, when the idea of using the Spanish language is brought up, then the cry goes up, "Those people are 1600 miles north of the border now! They better well learn English!"

Yes, it's true, they ought to learn English. But won't there be certain phrases in Spanish that will mean more to the Hispanic people just as there are those phrases in the German language? Even if they learn English so they can get by in daily life, at work, at play and in the stores, is that the kind of English we use in our worship services? For the most part aren't the liturgies in The Lutheran Hymnal in "KJV" English? As far as sermons go, is that the kind of English the Hispanics will hear on the streets or is it a more formal English? What about all the different religious words, justification, salvation, sanctification, redemption and others? English speaking people have difficulty with these words, imagine the Hispanics. How would we like to attend the Lord's Supper and all was said in Latin or Greek or Hebrew or German? Would we want to attend again? How would we feel while attending? What does the Hispanic feel?

Some one might argue then, that we ought to learn even more languages, Italian, French, Russian, etc. It is doubtful if any language today in this country is as useful and is spoken by as many people as is Spanish. (French might not be a bad idea in some areas of Canada.) So, is there a need for learning the Spanish language?

No doubt everyone has their own answer. "The missionary, of course,

would need to know Spanish-knowledge of the language and thus also of the customs would aid lay people. At present it appears best time for missionary to learn Spanish is after accepting a Spanish call." (# 15) Other negative answers: It's not a necessity in Wisconsin. (# 20); it will keep the Hispanics separate and apart from the rest of the English speaking community--"Preserving a cultural heritage is fine, but not at the expense of full participation in our society." (# 7) (This kind of statement may make our German heritage a barrier; this will be expanded later.)

The vast majority of replies felt there was a need for the future pastors to learn Spanish. It was suggested as an elective at NWC and/or DMLC. Although, "pastors have enough language instruction at sem (and NWC) that they don't need another at that time. Having lived outside the USA myself, I would say more could be learned in a six month intensive language program outside the USA than 4 years of Spanish study in this country." (# 12) This speaks highly of the Puerto Rican Vicar Program. But others felt learning another language would pose no problem. "I believe that there ought to be Spanish courses in our worker training schools so that more of our pastors have at least some knowledge of the language." (# 10) "I do believe more of our men should be learning Spanish. I feel an acute short-coming in this area when asked to prepare call lists for the South American Mission and now such missions as the one in Madison. It is very difficult to find men in our midst who are able to take over the Spanish departments in our area Lutheran H. S." (# 1) Knowledge of Spanish would be an asset.

Now, what about other barriers, such as the one alluded to above, the cultural barrier. Let's examine our German Heritage. There is,

of course, no getting around the fact that Luther was a German and that plays a large part of being a Lutheran. But has this German Heritage become a barrier to people of other cultural backgrounds? Now it is true that the Hispanics do try to retain their ethnic heritage, customs, and identity often by not becoming a part of the community at large. But haven't we done the same thing? We don't think of it that way because we've grown up with this German/European background. To us, our lifestyle, customs and heritage (probably better known by the name "tradition") is normal; but to the Hispanics it's strange. For the Hispanics, their lifestyle, customs and heritage are normal, ours is strange. "Many of the characteristics of people with northern European backgrounds in their ancestry form a pretty solid cultural barrier which severely hinders us in reaching out to other cultures. The characteristics include such a fine list as the following: cliquish, reserved to the point of appearing cold and unfriendly, super-disciplined, inflexible in accepting others who are less disciplined, not able to display emotions very easily and uncomfortable around those who do." (# 3) Unfortunately, I see myself all too clearly in this description.

Another barrier is the fact that most if not all Hispanics are nominally Catholic. To leave the Roman Catholic Church might include leaving behind family friends and culture. The Hispanics may fear that by changing churches they will be ostracized from their society.

Economics may also be a barrier. The barrier here is a stereotype. Many Hispanics think that all Americans are wealthy snobs. This stereotype needs to be broken down, and the longer the Hispanics live in one place, the easier it is for them to rid themselves of this notion. They realize that many Americans are as poor as they are. But for those

Hispanics in the migrant work force or who have "wander lust," these will never overcome the stereotype.

Thus, the language aside, there are barriers on both sides of the fence. There are barriers we have to overcome and barriers that the Hispanics have to overcome. But this is true of any mission field, and each mission field will have its own set of barriers that needs to be overcome.

#### METHODS FOR HISPANIC OUTREACH

In areas of high Hispanic concentration, like Milwaukee, the people at Mass Media might prove of invaluable help with methods already proven with English speaking people. These methods could then be adapted and translated for the Spanish speaking population. (# 22) Other suggestions were: train Hispanics in the congregation; (# 5 & 14) (a fine idea if there are some to train) radio broadcasts in heavily populated areas like Milwaukee; (# 7) (There is a Hispanic station in Milwaukee, WYLO.) the neighbor to neighbor approach; (# 19) Travel-Canvass-Witness; (# 21). Other methods suggested were a bit more extensive. "1. Bilingual VBS and canvassing, 2. Bilingual Sunday School, 3. Spanish services, 4. Follow-up calls on those canvassed." (# 3, 6, & 12) Another suggestion was: "1. Have District Mission Boards call men (full time) to areas of Hispanic population concentration. 2. Have District Mission Boards call Spanish-speaking seminarians for part-time vicar service in congregations with Hispanic Mission opportunities." (# 16) Another plan: "1. The Synod must keep the Spanish vicar program alive to build a pool of pastors who can speak Spanish. 2. The Mass Comm. Director in El Paso must work closely with the GBHM to share materials. (This was a short-coming cited at Mission Seminar.) 3. The Madison Mission



must be developed to provide a model of whether the mission should be completely independent or connected to an English congregation." (# 13)  
 Many of the suggestions hinge upon the ability to get Spanish material.

So, could the seminary in El Paso, TX, be helpful to a Hispanic outreach in the State of Wisconsin? "No-it is Mexico oriented." (# 15)  
 Most admitted that the purpose of the El Paso Seminary was to prepare Latin American and South American natives to return home and reach out with the Gospel. Although this is the purpose, it was thought the Seminary could possibly provide help in the future in the areas of VBS, Sunday School materials, tracts and proper theological language. The others had no ideas on this subject, and a few felt this Seminary would be of no use at all-(probably due to its purpose?).

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

"In general, I feel that we ought to be much more involved in Hispanic work in the U.S.A. than we are. We have just a few congregations. The CDHM is just now getting into further work, Madison, Miami area. Much more needs to be done in view of the fact that the Hispanic population is listed as the fastest growing minority in the U.S.A." (# 8) Of the 4,705,767 people in the State of Wisconsin, 62,972 are Hispanic (1.4%), with over half of them in the Milwaukee area. "We need more pastors able to speak the Spanish language. In general we need a vast improvement in our sensitivity to cultural differences. We also need more individual effort at reaching the Hispanics of our nation." (# 3) "If possible I would suggest that the feasibility of team ministries be considered so one person is not out by himself, isolated. . . . I hope those responsible are ready to commit themselves to a program that is strongly supported and not just 'tolerated' or a

token effort, and that provision will be made for responsible 'supervisors' who are fully committed to a program which will almost surely be more costly than the formulas which we use when thinking of establishing a new home mission station." (# 24) And finally, "I believe that the Lord has placed an unevangelized mission field right in our midst. Let's get in on the ground floor." (# 14)

It is felt that there is a need to reach out to the Hispanics in the State of Wisconsin. "Too much time has been spent questioning the need of the existence of a 'field' among the Hispanics. The need does exist. Now is the time for the synods to begin emphasizing Spanish classes in preparatory school and in the seminaries, and to begin identifying areas in the US that need Spanish-speaking pastors." (Quoted from Mission Seminar Booklet, Session V, p. V-16.) Yes, it's time. Let's begin the task of reaching out to the Hispanic population in the State of Wisconsin!

QUESTION #	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1.	NONE Fort Atkinson Hispanics 93	NONE	YES	SP	NO	NO	YES	--	--	Y/N	--
2.	YES Madison 3,280	4-8000	YES	SP	NO	--	YES	LIFE	"BIC"	Y/N	NI
3.	YES Madison 3,280	4-8000	YES	BOTH	NO	YES	YES	Q	Q	Y/N	MAYBE
4.	YES Lake Mills 33	less 100	NO	NA	NA	NO	YES	R.C.CH.	--	-/little	NO
5.	YES Jefferson 193	less 1000	YES	SP	NO	YES	YES	customs	"BIC"	N/little	YES
6.	YES Waukesha 3,998	2-4000	YES	BOTH	NO	YES	YES	family	canvass	Y/N	NI
7.	YES Waukesha 3,998	--	YES	ENG	NO	YES	YES	R.C.CH.	radio	Y/N	NI
8.	YES Brookfield 209	FEW	--	--	NO	--	YES	Miss. Sem.	--	Y/N	NO
9.	NO ??	less 1000	NO	NA	NA	YES	YES	NO	--	N/N	NI
10.	YES Milwaukee 34,343	9-15000	YES	SP	NO	YES	YES	NO	Q	Y/N	NI
11.	NO same	NI	NO	NA	--	NO	YES	NO	calls	Y/N	YES
12.	YES same	lots	YES	BOTH	NO	NO	YES	culture	Q	Y/Y	MAYBE
13.	YES same	25000+	YES	BOTH	NO	YES	YES	R.C.CH.	Q	Y/Y	MAYBE
14.	YES same	15-25000	YES	SP	NO	YES	YES	NI	train	Y/N	MAYBE
15.	YES same	9-15000	YES	BOTH	NO	NA	YES	attitude	"BIC"	Y/N	NO
16.	NO Mequon 98'	2	YES	SP	NO	NA	YES	YES	Q	Y/N	NO
17.	migrants few Montello 16	few	YES	SP	NI	YES	YES	YES	tracts	Y/N	MAYBE
18.	NO Schofield 5	FEW	NO	NA	NA	YES	YES	NO	--	Y/N	NO
19.	NO Green Bay 906 or Appleton-Oshkosh 1,504	less 1000	NO	NA	NO	YES	NI	NI	laity	NI/N	NI
20.	YES out of state	NA	YES	SP	NI	YES	YES	NO	See Comm.	N/N	NO
21.	NO ??	NA	YES	SP	YES	YES	YES	NO	TCW	Y/N	YES
22.	YES Milwaukee 34,343	35000+	YES	BOTH	NO	NA	YES	NO	Mass Media	Y/some	NI
23.	YES Green Bay or Appleton-Oshkosh 906 or 1,504	less 1000	NO	NO	NA	NO	YES	attitude	ask	Y/N	YES
24.	NA out of NA state	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	YES	YES	Q	Y/Y	In Future?

Y = yes N = no SP = Spanish ENG = English NI = No Idea

24 surveys returned out of 26 sent out.

Foreword to the Final Report of System Analysis and Needs Assessment to the Project Cristo Rey, An E.L.S. Outreach Model

The 1980 U.S. Census revealed a population growth of nearly 38% among Hispanics nationwide, accompanied by an estimated drop of 20% among white non-Hispanics. These statistics were even higher in the State of California. In some of the areas of Southern California, Hispanic residents comprise as much as 80% of the population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. While these figures seem staggering within a ten year period, they are, in fact, somewhat conservative considering that not all Hispanics were included in the Census, and that many of them identified themselves as white Caucasians.

It should be of interest to every Christian denomination and local congregation that the Hispanic population in this country is growing very rapidly, not only among the U.S.--Mexican border but throughout the United States. It is also important to note that the implications of these vital statistics on the future of Christian evangelism in this country have yet to be analyzed.

The astounding growth of Hispanics nationwide has already had a significant impact on the operations of virtually every other major institution. But it is apparent that our social institutions are simply not prepared to deal with the socio-economic, cultural and linguistic barriers confronted by this group. It is even more apparent that this inability continues because of the white English-speaking population in power. For too long, the latter has chosen to ignore the needs and constitutional rights of this emerging ethnic American group.

Let us take the educational system to illustrate a case in point. This system is controlled predominantly by white English-speaking bureaucrats. Historically, they have struggled to educate Hispanic children in the identical manner used for English-speaking pupils. In general, this has failed to provide an adequate education for these children, and has resulted in numerous lawsuits against school districts across the nation. To make matters worse, federal court orders have compounded the financial losses in a majority of these cases. Federal and state governments have been forced to enact laws to protect the constitutional rights of these children.

Congress has appropriated funding especially for two programs within the educational system for Hispanic non-English speaking children: "Title I Migrant Education," and "Title VI Bilingual-Bicultural Education." However, in most cases, this has only served to exaggerate pre-existing negative attitudes among teachers, administrators and other school officials. As a result, most of these programs have been poorly administered and the monies negligently spent. In May of 1982 a major setback occurred when the Reagan administration announced deep slashes in the funding for bilingual and migrant education for the 1982-1983 fiscal year.

Little has been accomplished to improve the level of education and employability of Hispanics in spite of government programs and funding. Recent studies conducted by the Labor Department show a disproportionate number of unemployed Spanish-origin youth and adults. Educational studies continue to show an

unusually high drop-out (push out) rate among Hispanic high school students.

In June of 1982 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of equal protection under the law for children of undocumented workers. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1965, together with Amendments to the U.S. Constitution will now be applied to guarantee these children an equal and appropriate educational opportunity at no cost. This decision has created a sudden shortage of trained bilingual teachers nationwide. According to some experts, it may take 19 years to fill this demand. However, given the projected increases in student enrollment and demand for bilingual teachers over the next 20 years. It is unlikely that this demand will ever be met.

There is no doubt that apathy and outright racism within the public education system have prevented Hispanics from gaining access to an equal educational opportunity in this country, in spite of their increasing numbers. Now there is also a growing concern among pastors and lay workers in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) and Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) that a similar situation may be developing within the two Synods with regard to the Hispanics. It is evident that something must be done when one visits one of our congregations located on a Spanish-speaking community and finds only white English-speaking members.

The two Synods have traditionally emphasized the need to send missionaries outside the U.S. to evangelize the Spanish-speaking world. However, their lack of consistency in reaching out to these same people in the States would lead one to believe the Lord has instructed us to make disciples in all nations, rather than of all nations.

Nonetheless, there have been some pastors and congregations in both synods who have attempted to share the Gospel with the Spanish-speaking people in this country, at least with those whom the Lord has placed on their doorstep. However, some have grown frustrated, eventually abandoning their efforts. Some of the problems these individuals confronted include: a lack of fluency in Spanish, lack of appropriate Spanish materials at all levels, lack of familiarity with the culture, and a lack of financial or other needed support from their congregations and/or synod.

In order to establish a home mission and assign a Spanish speaking pastor to an area, a synod mission board would look for a sizeable population in the contemplated region. However there is no clear formula to determine when a sizable Hispanic population does indeed exist. For those in the congregations in which lay workers are taking a lead in Spanish work, it is even more discouraging. There are no trained pastors to care for the Spanish-speaking Hispanics that are won. There is literally no light at the end of the tunnel.

To cite another problem, some pastors who try to serve Hispanics sometimes discover that there are members within their congregation who believe that their pastor should only be concerned with work directly related to their local church. These members are few, but sometimes very outspoken. They may try to make their pastors accountable for their time as if they had them on some type of welfare program. They do not take too

kindly to seeing their pastors spending too much time on "outside projects." What makes matters worse is that some pastors may give in to the demands of these individuals instead of instructing them in the Word and letting them know that pastors are first accountable to the Lord. After all, it is the called pastor who must lead the sheep, not the other way around.

Too much time has been spent questioning the need of the existence of a "field" among the Hispanics. The need does exist. Now is the time for the synods to begin emphasizing Spanish classes in preparatory school and in the seminaries, and to begin identifying areas in the U.S. that need Spanish-speaking pastors. Time is passing us by, and the fact is, most pastors know it. They also know that with each day that passes, large numbers of Hispanic souls are being lost to the Jehovah's Witnesses and other cults who are doing something.

Let us not delay doing this work any longer. We need to start sometime. Let us start now. You would surely agree if your own salvation depended on it, or that of your loved ones. The Bible teaches us that we ought to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Local congregations can begin their work by utilizing some of the experience, knowledge and other information gained by sister congregations presently working with Hispanics. The Holy Spirit will undoubtedly be pleased and bless their efforts!